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Comment on the French Scheme of Empire in Africa

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TRIPOLI IN BARBARY

INCLUDING AN INSIGHT INTO NORTH AFRICA AND
THE SAHARA AND A BRIEF COMMENT ON THE
FRENCH SCHEME OF EMPIRE IN AFRICA.

By Charles Wellington Furlong, F. R. G. S.

INTRODUCTION

The last hundred years have been essentially a century of the scientific exploitation of the world, in which, exploration, science and commerce have become *interdependent*, and thus have *tri-linked* themselves in seeking out and knowing the waste and hidden parts of the earth and their inhabitants. But it is in Africa in particular that modern European interest and enterprise have centered.

AFRICA

An unknown region is ever veiled with mystery, until man tears the veil apart, then, too frequently its enchantment moves back to the further beyond, like some elusive Circe. So, to the Christian nations, Africa long was and still is, to some extent, a fabulous land. Even after penetrating its vast solitudes or inhabited places, the explorer is thrilled with wonderful discoveries, and despite hardships, the land continues to hold over one a weird charm.

Africa is the world's great central continent, the Equator running exactly midway between its northern and southern extremities, which reach respectively the latitudes of the cities of Washington and Buenos Aires.

Starting from the veldt of Africa's great south central plateau, through her lake region, and vast equatorial forests, from which tower stupendous mountains capped with everlasting snows, we reach the great belt of the Sudan, 8 degrees to 16 degrees north of the Equator, where the great sea of green forest straggles out and terminates in a sea of golden sand,—the vast plateau of the Sahara.

Africa is the home of the Blacks, and as is shown in that new and valuable publication *The Negro in the New World* by Sir H. H. Johnston, the Negro paints it darkest in the southern half, gradually browning out through the negroid in the Sudan and north of it, where he has intermixed with the white-race Tuaregs of the Great Desert and the Arab and Berber tribes of North Africa and Arabia.

Here is a great region nearly four times the area of the United States, peopled with perhaps 170 millions, the majority of whom are in a savage or semi-barbaric condition. Many are still strong, virile, neolithic or paleolithic savages, whose primitive intellect, weapons and methods of warfare have been no match for the strategy and weapons of the Mohammedan slave-raider or the Christian slave-trader. But *today*, virtuous Europe no longer steals Africans from Africa; her civilization, honesty, and humanitarianism have frowned upon that, so she reverses the order of things and now steals Africa from the Africans. Thus we find Africa partitioned—sold out, as it were, among the nations of Europe. The body of the house is occupied by Great Britain, France and Germany, with Portugal, Italy, Spain and Holland trying to squeeze into the aisles, while Turkey, the “Sick man of Europe” is about to be carried out, and the unoccupied seats are marked “*reserved*.”

The Sudan has not only been the meeting ground of the desert and the forest, but likewise the big trade belt of North and South, East and West, with the great Hausa city of Kano as the important focal point—the metropolis of Africa, to which the great caravans from the north creep their way across the deserts to return north again. The most important caravans travel one or the other of the three principal trade routes which focus eventually in the city of Tripoli—the Gateway to the Sahara.

History of North Africa and Tripolitania

Twelve centuries before Christ, Phoenician traders had worked their way along the southern shores of the Mediterranean. As centuries rolled by Outili (Utica) and other

cities were reared, among them Carthage and at the close of the Third Punic War, the territory we now know as Tripolitania, became a province of the Caesars.

Three cities, Leptis, Sabrata, and Oea, anciently constituted a federal union known as Tripolis, while the district governed by their Concilium Annum was called Lybia Tripolitania. On the site of Oea modern Tripoli, in Barbary, now stands.

647 A. D. saw the beginning of the great Arab invasion, which sent the resistless tidal wave of the *Iad* (Holy War) sweeping across Barbary. It broke down what was left of Roman rule, and merged the wild Berber aborigines into the great sea of Islām.

Since that remote past the flags of various nations of the Cross have for brief periods flung their folds in victory over this Moslem stronghold. In the sixteenth century the Turkish Sultan, Soliman the Magnificent, drove the Knights of St. John from Tripoli, and received the submission of the Barbary States. In 1714 the Arabs of Tripoli gained independence from their Turkish rulers and for over a century were governed by their own bashaws.

In 1835 Tripoli again came under Turkish rule, since which time the crescent flag of the Ottoman has waved there undisturbed and Tripoli has continued to steep herself in the spirit of Islām, indifferent and insensible to the changes of the outer world.

Tripolitania today

The coast of North Africa from Tunis eastward does not meet the converging water routes short of its eastern extremity at Suez. Along the seaboard of this territory the Mediterranean laps the desert sand and over the unbounded, sun-scorched reaches of Tripoli and Barca, to the borderland of Egypt, wild tribes control the vast wastes.

The great territory of Tripolitania embraces what is known as the *vilayet* of Tripoli, the Fezzan to the south, and the province of Barca on the east, governed as an integral part of Turkey. The Pashālic of Tripoli includes that portion

of the vilayet extending from Tunisia to the southernmost point of the Gulf of Sidra.

Tripoli's freedom from European occupation may be attributed to three causes: her isolation from the main highways of commerce, the apparent sterility of her desert plateau as compared with the more fertile Atlas regions of the other Barbary states, and the fact that she is a vilayet of the Turkish Empire.

Tripoli—the City

In looking over Tripoli, one sees her on the edge of the desert—a dazzling, white-washed, color-tinted city, a great sea of flat housetops, broken only by several minarets, an occasional palm-tree, the castle battlements, and the flag-staffs of the European consulates. The mosques, the city walls, and some of the more important buildings are built of huge blocks of stone, but on the whole it is a city of sun-dried bricks, rafters of palm-wood, and whitewash.

At its eastern end is the ancient Castle of the Bashaws, the focus of the Turkish administration of Tripolitania, military and civil. It serves, not only as a prison and barracks, but as the headquarters of the Turkish Commander-in-chief, who rules as Pashā of the vilayet of Tripoli. He is in command of the twenty thousand troops who exercise general surveillance over the towns and districts where they are stationed. It is the duty of these scantily clad and poorly paid Ottomans to assist in collecting taxes from the poverty stricken Arabs, to protect caravans along the coast routes, and enforce Turkish administration in a few leading towns and their vicinities.

The Native Races

The majority of those who live in the towns of Tripolitania or drift through her oases and across her deserts are of the four great native races:

Berbers, descendants of the original inhabitants; Arabs, progeny of those conquerors who overran the country cen-

turies ago; the native Jew; and lastly, itinerant Blacks who migrate from the South.

The Berbers have settled throughout the mountains and plateau lands; the Arabs mostly in the towns and deserts, and the Blacks generally where fortune favors them most. Nearly all these people profess Mohammedanism, and intermarrying to some extent has gone on for centuries.

The Berber race is best represented in Barbary by the wild Kabyles of the Atlas, and in the heart of the Sahara by the fierce Touaregs. Moor and Bedaween best typify the Arabs; the Moor is a town-dwelling Arab, the Bedaween a nomad. Of the Blacks there are two classes, the bond and the free.

Last but not least, however, is the native Jew. In every town of Barbary where the Arab tolerates him there in the *Mellah* (Jewish quarter) he is found. Never seeming to belong there, yet omnipresent from the earliest times, he has managed not only to exist beside his Arab neighbors, but has thriven.

First, and most important of the intrusive foreign element are the Turkish military and merchants. Next in numbers are the several hundred Italians and a Maltese colony of fisher-folk who live near the Lazaretto (Quarantine) by the sea. Members of the foreign consulates and a few other Europeans complete the population.

In Tripoli the religious classification of Moslem, Jew and Christian is most emphasized perhaps by their respective holidays, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. From the Western point of view this interferes somewhat with trade, but is not felt by those who would regard life as one long siesta.

As in all North Africa so in Tripoli evidences of the Roman occupation confront one on every hand. Columns of a Pagan Rome support the beautiful domed vaultings of some of the mosques, or, are set in as corner posts to the houses at every other turn, and the drums thrown lengthwise and chiselled flat are used as steps or door-sills. Beyond the walls of the town fragments of tessellated pavements laid down 2000 years ago are occasionally found.

In the very heart of Tripoli stands what once must have been one of the most splendid, triumphal arches of antiquity. It is known to the Moors as the Old Arch; to the Europeans, as the Arch of Marcus Aurelius, in whose honor it was erected A. D. 164.

Through its narrow streets Tripoli's thirty thousand inhabitants go to their tasks and pleasures. Under arches, trellised vines or in little booths most of the industries necessary to the subsistence of the town are carried on.

At every hand one is enclosed by one or two storied houses, whose bare walls with few windows and heavily made doors give little suggestion of the beauties of color and craftsmanship those of the better class may contain.

Spanning the street of the *Suk-el-Turc* (Turk's Market) is a trellis-work covered with grape-vines. Here most of the official business is transacted, and notaries as well as other public officials have their offices. In the quiet shadows of long arcades, men pass noiselessly in slippered feet over carpets and rugs from Kairwan, Misurata, and the farther East.

To the casual Occidental observer, undoubtedly the visual impressions are paramount. For the atmospheric color in its semi-tropical brilliancy serves to make more effective and luminous the variegated detail of local color—of people, houses, mosques and bazaars. But to one to whom it is a prism through which he views Moorish thought and character in deeper relationship, it has a far-reaching symbolism—the all-prevading influence of Islām.

Character

It is little wonder that here in the Bled-el-Alteusch—The Country of Thirst—where the relentless sun enforces rest and the great solitudes seem to brood a sadness over things, there has been engendered in all the people a life of contemplation and fatalism little known and still less understood by thicker-blooded men whose lives are spent in struggle and activity against the adverse elements of northern climes.

Tripoli is a land of contrasts—rains which turn the dry

river beds into raging torrents and cause the country to seem to blossom over night, then month after month without a shower over the parched land; suffocating days and cool nights; full harvests one year, famine the next; without a breath of air, heat-saturated, yellow sand wastes bank against a sky of violet blue; then the terrific blast of the *gibli*, the south-east wind-storm, lifts the fine powdered desert sand in great whoofs of blinding orange, burying caravans and forcing the dwellers in towns to close their houses tightly.

Arab character in a marked degree seems to be the child of its environment and has inherited many of the characteristics of the great solitudes among which it has dwelt for thousands of years. On the one hand the Arab is hospitable and open-handed; on the other hand treacherous, grasping, and cruel; seemingly mild and lazy, yet he is capable of performing extraordinary feats of labor. His religion and literature are full of poetry, but many of their tenets are lacking in his daily life. In his architecture and design the highest artistic instinct is shown, yet the representation of any living thing is forbidden. Stoical and dignified, yet he is capable of being roused by any wandering marabout to an ungovernable state of fanaticism; now you know him, again he is as mysterious and changeable as the shifting sand about him; by nature he is a nomad, a dweller in tents rather than in towns. "Allah hath bestowed four peculiar things upon us," say the Arabs: "Our turbans shall be to us instead of diadems, our tents in place of walls and houses, our swords as intrenchments, and our poems instead of written laws."

By the creed of Islām all lines are drawn, all distinctions made. Upon the traditions of Mohammed and the interpretations of the Korān the Arab orders his manner of life in polity, ethics, and science, and "Allah hath said it," is the fatalistic standard of his daily life. The teachings of the Korān and centuries of warfare in which women were but part of the victor's loot have in no small degree helped to develop that exclusiveness which is a cardinal principle

in the Moslem life, for there is no social intercourse among Mohammedans in the Occidental sense of the word.

Taxation

The Turkish Imperial taxation is under the head of *verghi* (poll and property tax) and the tithe on agricultural produce. During the ten years preceding my sojourn in Tripoli in 1904, the total averaged \$540,000 annually.

The *verghi* payable by the vilayet was fixed at a sum equivalent to \$408,000. Only in two years was this obtained, in 1901 and surpassed in 1902. Both were years of bad harvests, showing the tremendous pressure which must have been brought to bear on the peasants by the authorities. During the past thirty years the trade of Tripoli has been stationary, with an average value of \$3,850,000—exports balancing imports with remarkable regularity.

The countrymen convert all their scant earnings into silver ornaments, and these are deposited on the persons of their wives—a veritable burden of riches, for they are constantly worn. I have run across women hauling water under the cattle yoke of the desert wells, literally loaded down with pounds of silver, while the husband sat on the edge of the well-curb and directed the irrigation of his fields.

This silver forms an important function as a barometer of the country's prosperity, to read which one has but to go to the little booths of the silversmiths in the trellis-covered Suk-el-Turc and note whether the country people are sellers or buyers. In 1900, a year of poor crops, \$72,500 worth of this old silver, so dear to the womankind of the peasantry, was broken up and exported, chiefly to France.

Though the Tripolitan is quick to learn, he has little creative genius, and his constitutional apathy is a formidable barrier against departure from his primitive customs and traditions. In the deserts certain tribes live by means of reprisals and by extorting heavy tolls from caravans. In the vicinity of the populated districts there are marauding

bands of thieves, and in the towns and *suks* (markets) are scheming ne'er-do-wells. But from *my* observation, most of the people hard-earned their bread at honest labor; the artisan in the town, the farmer in the country, the trader and caravan man on the trails.

Agriculture

While the vilayet of Tripoli is a purely agricultural province, a very small area of these barren, inhospitable wastes is cultivated or cultivable under present conditions, and one need not look far for the primary cause—the yoke of Turkish taxation.

The district which lies between the crumbling eastern extremity of the Atlas known as the Tripoli Hills and the sea forms almost the entire present productive soil of the vilayet of Tripoli, being two-fifths of its 410,000 square miles. In this narrow strip, Arabs, Berbers and Bedawi cultivate cereals, vegetables and fruit trees. Here one is transported into an Old Testament land, to a people who still cling with childish tenacity to the picturesque and crude customs of ages past.

The soil, however, is so fertile, that with abundant rains the harvests are surprising in their yield. The seed sown is occasionally wheat, guinea corn, or millet, but generally barley, the staple food of the Arab.

Through lack of rain the Tripolitan can count on only four good harvests out of ten. This also affects the wool production, and in bad years the Arab, fearing starvation, sells his flocks and his seed for anything he can get. Through lack of initiative and encouragement added to the burden of heavy taxation, fully one-half of the cultivable soil lies fallow, and the Arab cattle-raiser, or peasant sows only sufficient seed for his support through the coming year. Any surplus which may be acquired, however, generally finds its way into the hand of the usurer and the tax gatherer, so that the Arab stands to lose by extended cultivation.

Markets

Outside the town walls, or at established spots within the oases, *suks* (markets) are held on certain days of the week. To these, over the sandy highways through the palm groves, passes the native traffic—small caravans of donkeys and camels loaded with the products of agriculturists, and shepherds with their flocks of sheep.

Instinctively the natives prefer to barter, but this method of trade has been greatly superseded by the use of Turkish currency, although napoleons and sovereigns pass in the coast towns as readily as *paras* and *medjidies*.

Industries

Of Tripoli's principal industries, three stand out pre-eminently—sponge-gathering, esparto picking, and the trans-Saharan caravan trade through which the principal resources respectively of sea, coast, and Desert, (including the Sudan), are made marketable exports. Besides these, great quantities of cattle (in good years) eggs, mats, old silver, woolen cloths, and other local products are shipped annually, going mainly to Great Britain, France, Turkey, Italy, Malta, Tunis, and Egypt. One article only—Sudan skins—finds its way to the United States, which supply depends upon the security of the trade routes. These skins go to New York for the manufacture of a cheap grade of gloves or shoes.

Coast

Out of Tripoli's total export trade of about \$2,000,000, sponges amounted to \$350,000 or over a fifth, esparto grass to \$630,000 or over a third, and goods from the trans-Saharan caravan trade to \$314,000 or over one-sixth. The other remaining three-tenths of her exports comprise the products of the oases and towns on or near the coast.

The seaboard of Tripolitania particularly off Tripoli can well afford to boast of its share of maritime destruction.

In Tunis, Algiers, and other ports in the two French North African colonies, good harbors have been construc-

ted and vessels unload at the quays, but in Tripoli and Morocco all cargoes are transferred in lighters or galleylike row-boats, and little protection is offered vessels lying at anchor.

Tripoli harbor affords better protection to vessels than many on the North African coast; but because of dangerous reefs and shoals it is a most difficult harbor to enter.

Sponge Industry

In the Eastern half of the Mediterranean, along the coast from Tunis to the Levant, including the islands of the Aegean Sea, stretch great regions of sponge colonies. Those extending for three hundred and fifty miles along the North African coast, from the Tunisian frontier to Misurata on the east, are known as the Tripoli grounds, and here with the last north winds of the rainy season come the sponge fleets from the Greek Archipelago. In this industry the sea claims its largest toll of human lives through that deadly enemy of the *scaphander* [helmeted diver]—diver's paralysis.

Out of the seven hundred scaphanders working on this coast, from sixty to a hundred die every year, and, sooner or later, hardly a man escapes from it in one form or another. These conditions are due, in great part, to the ignorance and brutality of the men engaged in the industry. On the other hand, there have been captains from Aegina, who have been in business for fifteen years and have never lost a diver.

The Greek government, however, is doing everything possible to remedy the conditions. It has laid down certain laws, and assigns to these grounds a hospital ship and a corvette and maintains a hospital on shore. But owing to the extensive area of the sponge grounds and other causes, it is almost impossible to keep watch and detect those who violate the laws.

The industry is carried on from April to October.

A sponge fleet consists of five or six ton machine boats which carry air-pumping machines and equipment called (*scaphandra*), and which are divided into two classes, according to the quality of their diver's suits which deter-

mine the depth of diving. As the fleets keep to sea for two months at a time, every four machine boats are attended by one fifty-ton deposit boat (*deposita*). Aboard the deposit boat are stored the sponges, food, clothing, and other necessities. Smaller supply boats (*bakietta*) communicate with shore, bring supplies from Greece, and also men, to take the places of those who have died. Some three thousand men work by scaphandra on the African coast. Today the scaphanders alone remain to claim the profits of the industry, the proceeds of which in a single year have amounted to almost a million dollars.

Tripoli sponges are inferior to those found in other parts of the Mediterranean, the best quality (those gathered from rocks) is worth from \$4.00 to \$5.00 per oke (2.82 lbs.); and the third quality, brought up without intent by the trawlers, from \$2.40 to \$4.00 per oke.

Often great strings of sponges bleaching and drying in the sun cover large portions of the standing rigging of deposit boats when in port. When dry they are worked up in sand, then packed in boxes ready for shipment; a third to a quarter of the crop is sold direct from Tripoli, mainly to England, to France and to Italy; the bulk of the crop, unbleached and unprepared, is taken at the close of the season to the islands from which the boats came, where long experience, manipulation and cheap labor prepare them for the European market.

Esparto

From Portugal and Spain, along the sandy regions of the Atlas, as they range through the western half of Northern Africa until they finally dwindle away into the desert sands of Tripoli there grows at intervals at the bases of the mountains, and on the plateau lands great seas of a waving, broom-like grass called, *esparto* by the Europeans—*halfa* by the Arabs. In Spain and the Barbary states *esparto* is an object of commercial enterprise, in Tripoli the grass is gathered by the Arabs of the *wadan* (country) and it is later shipped in great bales to England for the manufacture of paper.

Despite the fact that the esparto is considered nonreproductive and is incapable of cultivation, I noticed that the Arabs pulled it up, root and all. This is the custom among the esparto pickers in Tripoli, and was so in Tunis and Algeria until the French put a stop to this disastrous method of gathering. Now they require it to be cut, and thus the great esparto districts of *Oran*, *Bougie*, *Philippeville*, and *Oued Laya* owe their preservation to the foresight of the French colonial government.

Far out on the sunscorched foothills of the djebel the esparto picker gathers the strong fibrous stem from the sparsely scattered clumps, always wary of the rock scorpion and viper. When the time is ripe for transporting the esparto to the seaports of Bengazi, Khoms, Zleiten and Tripoli, caravans are organized and take up the march of from two to four days as the camel journeys.

A cursory glance at the *Suk-el-Halfa* or *esparto* market will impress even the stranger with the importance of the esparto trade, and a few words with any Tripolitan merchant will reveal the fact that not only is it Tripoli's leading export, but in years of little rain and scant harvest, with practically the extinction of the trans-Saharan caravan trade, it is the only *natural* resource which the Arab peasant can fall back upon.

Since 1868, when the first shipload of esparto was sent to England, vessels have borne away thousands of tons yearly to that country. You or I pick up a heavy looking novel, perchance, and marvel at its lightness, and the reader of some London newspaper peruses its columns and then casts aside the finished product of the esparto pickers.

In 1901, which was an average year, 215,155 camel loads came into the coast towns; nearly 134,000 passed through the gateway to the Suk-el-Halfa, the total export of the country amounting to about 33,000 tons. That from the town of Tripoli, 16,690 tons, brought £75,000, which was over a fourth of the amount of Tripoli's total exports.

But while the esparto trade today is Tripoli's leading export, back in the *jebel*, (mountains) the halfa picker still with ruthless shortsightedness tears and rips it root and all

from the sandy wastes. Each successive year now entails longer journeys to the coast, with increased labor and cost of transportation. Each year brings smaller returns, three pounds per ton being the selling price in England, as compared with twelve pounds of former times.

A decreasing demand for esparto grass has followed the introduction of wood pulp into England from North America and Norway, naturally resulting in a decreased value in the English market. And many pickers have preferred to leave the gathered grass to the sun and the sandstorm to transporting it at little profit, and, perhaps, loss. Not many years hence, will, in all likelihood, see the passing of the esparto trade of Tripoli, of a labor big and primitive, of swarthy Arabs, heavily burdened camels, and sweating black men.

Caravan Trade

The town of Tripoli is the nearest North African coast port for the Sudan. The sun scorched surface of the Sahara with its sand-hills and oases, mountain ranges and plateau, is greater in area by some half million miles than the United States and Alaska combined, and is peopled by some three to four millions of Berbers, Arabs and Blacks, with a few Turkish garrisons in the north. By way of Ghadamès, Ghat, and Murzuk, through the Fezzan to Lake Chad, go the caravan trails, and then far away south again, to the Sudan, Land of the Blacks. Here its teeming millions form the great negro states of Bambara, Timbuctu, and Hausaland in the west; Bornu and Baghermi around Lake Chad; Wadi, Darfur, and Kordufan in the east, extending from Abyssinia to the Gulf of Guinea.

Of these trails, their trade, and the men who escort the heavily loaded caravans little enough has been said; still less of the innumerable dangers which constantly beset them as they creep their way across the burning desolate wastes, on their long journeys to the great marts of the Sudan,—Timbuctu, Kano, Kanem, Kuka, Bornu and Wadi.

At times large profits are reaped, but frequently large losses are entailed, not so much through the rise and fall of

the European market as through the dangers *en route*, in which attacks and pillage by Desert robbers, and reprisals to make good losses incurred by tribal warfare, play no small part.

Caravans vary in size, from that of some lone, nomadic trader or esparto picker, who trudges beside his few camels on his way to some local market, to the great trans-Saharan trade caravans with thousands of camels, not to mention donkeys, goats, sheep, and dogs. Such a caravan is rarely met with; it takes a year or more to outfit; thousands of dollars are invested by Arabs and Jewish merchants. Its numerical strength is increased by smaller caravans, whose *sheiks*, believing in the safety of numbers, often delay their own departure for months.

Moving south from Tripoli, it must cover some fifteen hundred miles of arid desert before it reaches one of the important marts of the Sudan.

After numerous stops and leaving many animals and men to the vultures, the caravan, if fortunate, reaches its destination. In its heavy loads are packed the heterogeneous goods generally taken, consisting of cotton and wool, cloth, waste silk, yarn, box rings, beads, amber, paper, sugar, drugs, and tea of which British cotton goods form more than fifty per cent of the value. Besides these it carries some native products. This cargo is bartered for the products of the Sudan; ivory, ostrich feathers, guinea corn, and gold dust. A year, perhaps after its arrival it begins the return voyage, with a cargo likely enough amounting to nearly a million dollars in value; and it is a question whether it ever reaches Tripoli.

Fonduks, (caravansaries) serve as places of rest and protection, and in some cases supply depots, the importance of the fondūk to caravans and the trade is inestimable. These are usually rectangular enclosures with arcades along the sides and open in the centre, surrounded by the palm and olive gardens of the keeper, who may supply fresh fruits, vegetables, and other domestic products. There is one main entrance protected by heavy doors, which are barred at night. Usually either town or country caravansaries occur

so frequently on the trails that long, forced marches are seldom necessary. About four cents per head is charged for camels and a nominal price for goats and sheep; at fonduks green fodder and other supplies may generally be obtained.

Many of the sultans and chiefs, particularly the Touaregs, through whose territories lie the caravan routes, exact not only homage but tribute from the caravan *sheiks*. To bring this tribute within a reasonable sum and secure a safe conduct requires extraordinary skill and tact. The opportunities for dishonesty afforded the caravan men are many, and occasionally men and goods are never heard from again.

The Desert

South from Tripoli, the interminable African main drifts on to the Sudan; west to east it sweeps the whole width of Africa. Even at the Red Sea it merely pauses for a moment at the brink, then dips beneath the limpid waters and continues across Arabia, Persia, and into northern India. For a thousand miles along the western half of North Africa this belt is screened from Europe by the Atlas Mountains, whose lofty peaks cut a ragged line against the sapphire welkin above them. For a thousand miles along the eastern half of North Africa the Desert meets the sea.

The fertile littoral and the mountainous region of Barbary, which extends as far back as the high plateau lands, are called by the Arabs the *Tell*. It is a remarkably rich grain-producing country. Then comes the territory which they designate the *Sah'ra* (Sahara)—a country of vast table-lands, over which is sprinkled a veritable archipelago of oases. Here, under the shadow of their date palms, the inhabitants grow gardens and graze flocks and herds on the open pasturages. Due to the imperfection of geographical knowledge, the name Sahara was erroneously applied by Europeans to the entire region of the Great Desert. Beyond these table-lands of the Sahara lies what, to the Arabs, is the real desert, called *Guebla*, or South, a vague

term applying not only to the arid wastes which we call the Sahara, but also to its hinterland, and the Sudan.

It is a mistake to consider the Desert one great waste of hot level sand. Sand there is in abundance, and heat, too; but there are rocky areas, high mountains, and tablelands, over which in the north, through the regions of Barbary, sweep the cold, penetrating winds of the African winter. Snow falls in the highlands; and after the rains in the spring the whole country seems to burst forth in a wealth of flora.

On the rocky slopes of the mountains, among the parched, thorny shrubs, sparse tufts of rank, yellowed grass, and poisonous milk plants, can be traced the nocturnal wanderings of the hyena, by the huge, dog-like tracks he has left; there, too, the jackal howls as the moon lifts over a mountain crag; or the terrific roar of the lion suddenly breaks the stillness of the night, as though to shake the very mountains from their foundations and send their great boulders crushing down on some sleeping Arab *douar* (village) which, perchance, lies at their base, like a great glow-worm in its stilly whiteness.

The daily aspect of the Sahara is the reverse of that of our country, for in the Desert the landscape is generally light against the sky, which in color so nearly complements the orange-sand as to intensify greatly the contrast. One feels the strange weirdness, the uncanny solitude, the oppressive heat and monotony which make the day's work a constant fight against fatigue, ennui and sometimes sun madness. Watch the sun sink and the color of its light sift through space as through gems; there, where the blue sky lowers to the hot sand, it might have filtered through some green peridot of the Levant. Such are some of the aspects of the Desert, whose charm places one under a spell which it is beyond the power of words to make real to the imagination of one who has never seen it.

It is little wonder that the ancients saw in the Sahara, dark-dotted with oases, the graphic simile of "The Leopard's Skin." The call of those limitless reaches is as subtle and insidious as must be the snow fields of the Arctic.

Oases practically determine the courses of the trade routes which for centuries have been the great arteries of the Desert, oft red-painted with the life-blood of caravans. The size of an oasis, like that of a caravan, is not a fixed quantity, but varies from a few date-palms around a Desert spring to areas over which thousands of these "hermits," as the Arabs call the palms, raise their delicate shafts. One oasis south of Algeria contains over 280,000 trees, and the oasis of Tuat, south of Morocco, covers many square miles of territory. Oases are practically all inhabited; most of them are the result of man's planting, and in many sandy regions a constant warfare must be waged by him against the encroaching sands.

Water

Water may be struck in almost any region of the Sahara and brought to the surface by artesian wells, which are destined to be important factors in its development.

In the Desert south of Tunisia there is an artesian well constructed by M. de Lesseps, over 25 years ago, the water from which rises 25 feet in the air and is made to irrigate 400 to 500 acres of land, on which are growing date-palms, pomegranates, tomatoes, onions and cucumbers. Previous to the construction of this well the whole of the oasis was nothing but barren sand.

This presence of water is perhaps, not difficult to explain. One follows a river, which gradually lessens as the distance from its source increases until it is finally lost; drunk up by the sands. After disappearing, it follows underground courses and with other streams helps to form vast subterranean lakes. Such is the case with many rivers which flow from the southern slopes of the Atlas. These, in all probability, eventually find their way to that vast depression of which the salt wells of Tãodēni are the center.

Water, of course, is an important feature of the caravan trade. Where distances between oases are great, Desert wells are sunk at intervals along the trails.

In some parts of the Desert, particularly in the country of the Touaregs, there are many hidden wells known to them

alone, and it is said they will find a hidden well within a day or two's journey from any point in the Sahara. Wells play an important part in Desert warfare, and the control of a well has more than once been the determining factor in a Desert fray, the besiegers being forced to retire for water. Since, in all lands, riches consist of the possession of that which is the greatest universal need and desire, it is not strange that, in some parts of those arid wastes, a man's wealth is reckoned by the number of wells that he controls.

The Sands

Watch a light zephyr from the southeast as it playfully picks up and twirls the whiffs of sand dust swirling about the legs of men and animals and stinging against their faces. Perhaps it dies down as quietly as it came; perhaps the wind increases and brings the terrific suffocating sand storm in its wake, which may enshroud the land for a week in its suffocating, swirling, yellow gloom leaving shapes weird and picturesque; here, like fossilized waves of the sea; there crossing and recrossing each other in endless monotony.

The Desert as an obstacle to communication has in many cases, been greatly exaggerated. However, the numerous bones which strew the trails bear ample evidence that the Desert, like the sea, claims its toll. Still it is a practical and much-used highway to its several million inhabitants. The black shepherds of the high steppes of the Adrar region, north-west of the Niger country, cross the Igidi Desert every year with their flocks, which they sell in the great markets in the oases of Tuat. In like manner, herds of cattle are driven from the south into the region of the Hoggar Tuaregs, and might easily continue north to Algeria if fodder were grown for them in the oases.

Before the advent of the draught camel into the western Sahara the ancients tell of a people called the Garamantes, who made the long trans-Saharan voyages with burden-bearing cattle; and many inscriptions, rough-hewn on the Desert rocks, bear witness to the previous existence of these people.

The central part of the Desert does not seem to have any great intrinsic value, although the high steppes between the Sahara and the Sudan could be converted into pasturages with a distinctly economic value. Such use is made of the plateau lands of northern Tripoli and southern Tunisia and Algeria. Tunisia has but a million and a half inhabitants; under the Caesars it is said to have supported a population of twenty millions and still had enough cereals to stock Rome, acquiring, with Algeria and Tripoli, the proud distinction of being the granary of the Roman Empire.

There seems good reason to believe that, while the Desert sands encroach northward, there is following in their wake the fertile, tropical vegetation of the Sudan—that the Sudan is encroaching on the Sahara.

TRIPOLI

But what of the morrow of North Africa and Tripolitania. The great dynamic forces of modern civilization cause events to march with astounding swiftness. Tripoli, in Barbary, is already in the eye of Europe; tomorrow the Tripoli of today may have vanished. Thus we are led to take a look into the international grab-bag of Europe, and discover that France and great Britain have seized practically *all* the packages 'marked *North Africa*' and France has the biggest fistfull. Thus in a consideration of Tripolitania's future, we must know something of the policy of France not only in Barbary, but in its relation to its scheme for a vast African Empire.

Ever since the Red Cross knights planted their flaring standards over Acre and Ascalon, and St. Louis raised his banners on the heights of Carthage, Frank has been the synonym of European to the Orientals of North Africa. When France's policy of territorial acquisition throughout Africa is correlated and surveyed as a whole, one may well be astounded at its wonderful foresight and the stupendous character of its scheme: a scheme which undoubtedly was that of bringing about the eventual acquisition of more than two-thirds of the entire continent of Africa, a terri-

tory larger in area than the United States and Alaska combined and including a population probably more than a quarter as large. It is evident that its plan has been to acquire as much territory as possible along the Mediterranean, down the Atlantic seaboard to the French Congo, thence across Central Africa to Egypt, and from these footholds to converge toward the central Sahara. Its influence in great sections of the Sudan and Central Africa was promulgated mainly by missionaries, particularly the White Fathers. These men, under Cardinal Lavigerie, commenced their crusade against slavery "*for France and the Church*" in the late 'forties,' and at the sacrifice of life and health crossed the sunscorched sands of the Sahara and penetrated the miasmatic, fever-laden jungle of the Sudan and Central Africa to Nyanza, Tanganyika, and Nyassa. Even in Egypt, France spared no pains to increase its influence and impress the native. Behind the French missionary came the French explorer, the trader, and the soldier.

The last three years of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth saw three famous expeditions in the North African field. A remarkable one—ostensibly scientific in its aim—under M. Fernand Faureau, reached the great desert capitals on the trans-Saharan caravan routes, Air and Zinder, and pushed on to the regions beyond Lake Tchad and the country of the fierce Rabah, the Mohammedan ravager and conqueror. Here Faureau was joined by an expedition under Lieutenant Joalland from the west, and another under M. Gentil from the south. The union of these three expeditions established French control over that territory, thus connecting the French possessions of the Sahara through the Tchad regions of the Sudan with the French Congo. No European power seriously hampered this eastward movement through the Sudan until certain French operations reached the upper valley of the White Nile, under another and more important expedition commanded by Colonel Marchand.

It started from the upper Ubangi, in the French Congo and moved eastward to join the force under the Marquis de

Bonchamp, who advanced from Abyssinia westward to meet him in the upper Nile basin.

The object of this expedition was essentially a political one. French aims in Lower Egypt being blocked by Britain, a footing in upper Egypt would not only strengthen its position there, and perhaps through Abyssinia eventually give France an outlet to the western coast, but would block Britain's plan of an empire from the Cape to Cairo. At Fashoda the *west-east* trail of the Gaul crossed the *north-south* course of the Saxon—two stupendous schemes of empire diametrically opposed to one another. Someone had to give way and the result was the Fashoda incident.

The fact that this affair engendered the bitterest feelings and all but involved the two Channel nations in war goes far to prove the importance to each of the strategic value of that territory. Blocked at this point France seemed to redouble her efforts in Morocco, which since the fortifying of Gibraltar and the opening of the Suez Canal by the British, made Morocco—the golden orange of Barbary—more than ever a desirable possession to the Powers, more particularly Great Britain and France.

French intrigues and attempts to create a paramount French sentiment among the Moroccans were most successful. Constantly, consistently, France picked up the threads Great Britain dropped and wove a network of schemes about her quarry, extending her schools, protection policy, government loans, influence and western Algerian border line, whenever opportunity offered. The revolution of the Pretender in 1902–4 brought about conditions which were considered to so have imperilled the lives of the hated *nsara* (foreigners) that some solution for their protection seemed necessary. By strange coincident the time also seemed ripe for an understanding as to first claims on *Al-Mogreb*, the Land of the West, and the claimants naturally dwindled down to two principals—Great Britain and France.

Then came the Anglo-French treaty of 1904, far-reaching in its geographical and political significance—adjusting all unsettled territorial questions upon which Great Britain

and France differed and strange as it may seem this very nation which thwarted France at Fashoda, now gave her a privileged position in Morocco for certain concessions regarding Egypt. One of those clauses not only leaves it to France to carry out all administrative, economic, financial and *military* reforms required to preserve order in Morocco, so long as British treaty rights are left intact, but Article IX reads:—"The two governments agree to accord to one another their diplomatic support in order to obtain the execution of the clauses of the present declaration regarding Egypt and Morocco." The stupendous character and scope of this treaty in my opinion makes it one of the most important ever made. Thus it came about that France in 1908 instituted military proceedings on the western coast with Britain's backing, and only an ineffectual protest from Germany.

From Tangier, two hundred miles down the Atlantic seaboard of Morocco you come upon a little seaport town of sun-dried bricks, wood and whitewash, save for the town walls and some important buildings in the European quarter which are of stone:—*Dar el Beida* the Arabs call it, Casablanca say the Spaniards. Here France found her *casus belli* in a mob outbreak and lost no time in following her advantage by landing a large force numbering over five thousand troops, many being from the famous Algerian corps—the Spahis Saharien.

No one who knows anything of the French policy in Algeria and Tunis could have accepted without reservation the reports of the bombardment and invasion of Casablanca. Flaring headlines announced plans to "Massacre all Christians," to drive "the infidels" into the sea; "the European Quarter is Threatened;" "Tribesmen are gathering in the hills in overpowering numbers" and "The irresistible tidal wave of uprising is about to break forth." It is safe to say that the French press "colored" these reports.

That there was an aggressive element among the Moors, there is no doubt; but with the promise of the Moorish governor of Casablanca to maintain order, a strong French

guard at the consulates and city gates would probably have met all immediate need of protection. Instead, a large French force aggressively entered the town to quiet the rioting, and not only the suburbs but the town itself was shelled by the warships.

This naturally precipitated matters, for the news spread like wildfire that the long contemplated invasion of Morocco by the hated French had begun. The farmer tribes, with Algeria, Igli, and Figuig fresh in their minds, gathered their bands together and hastened to the coast. With what result? A few French soldiers were killed and wounded, while hundreds of Moroccans were slaughtered before the machine guns and shell-fire of the French.

France chose the psychological moment to definitely continue its inevitable acquisition of Morocco. Europe was admirably adjusted to that end. Britain's understanding with Russia and Austria, France's own regard for Italy's interests in Tripoli and its control of Spanish finances, left Germany alone in the opposing field. And the previous forced European policy of mutual, jealous forbearance toward Morocco was at an end, and another decade will see Moroccans using "inventions of the devil" and the country prospering.

Six years ago I ventured to predict the futility of the French "*penetration pacifique*" of Morocco, that not until more blood had been shed and the sacred mosque of *Djdid* in Fez falls like that of Sidi Okda at Kairwan (under the French civil governor), will the country begin in earnest its march to civilization—to the tune of the Marseillaise.

Having previously acquired Algeria, a little over twenty years ago, just as Italy was spreading her wings over Tunisia, France alighted on the quarry. French policy in these two states will serve as a good criterion by which to forecast the future of Morocco. The narrow streets, mud walls, and sun-dried bricks will give way to broad boulevards and modern houses;—the cry of the donkey driver to the squawk of the electric tram,—the wild mountain trails and river fords to splendid roads and modern bridges, the hand-

flail of the Arab farmer to the steam thrasher, the fallow land of mountain and valley to extensive plantations.

Also will come the evils of civilization, to sharpen the Moroccan's wits and dull his scant morality. France will carry out in Morocco, as in Algeria and Tunisia, a discriminating policy—not only against the Moroccan but against all who ply their trade in Morocco who are not Frenchmen. This has been its policy in North Africa and there is no reason to believe that it will stop at the Moroccan boundary line, despite certain conditions of the Anglo-French treaty. Nor for the same reason are we to suppose that France will refrain from fortifying or using as naval bases certain towns on the Moroccan seaboard.

When France has added to its African colonies the 170,000 square miles of Morocco and assimilated to some extent the 900,000 of people it will have won one of its greatest diplomatic contests, its richest colony, and its most valuable strategic position in the Mediterranean.

The Moroccan, as the Algerian and Tunisian, on the whole, will benefit by French colonization; military protection will safeguard his interests from warring tribes; regular wages, schools, and courts will be some of the things which he will obtain in exchange for the sacrifice of his country and his wild independence, in this last crusade of the Frank; and France will administer lessons to him in "liberté, égalité, fraternité" and continue to give its attention to the realization of its dream of an African Empire.

THE FUTURE TRIPOLITANIA

The productive character of the Sudan and Central Africa is well known; but of the Sahara—what of those great, limitless, sun-baked desert reaches?

The French, to some extent, will reclaim it; that which they do not reclaim will be necessary for them to control for commercial and political reasons. That which is reclaimed for agricultural purposes will be done by irrigation—through the artesian well and the conservation of vast water supplies during the rains.

Should Tripolitania seem necessary to France in the furtherance of its scheme of African Empire, and she can annex it without too great a loss of prestige or policy, the French will *acquire* Tripolitania. But at present there is the bugbear of the unspeakable Turk,—then again Italy, chagrined and angered at the French Tunisian seizure has turned her attention to a garden plot at her very back door, where today, next to Turkey, her interests and influence unquestionably predominate. To make future occupation secure, however, Italy must make some tacit arrangement with France for a free hand, and prevail upon the other Powers to admit her interests there; perhaps she has. It is to be hoped, however, that the accession of Mehemed V. to the Sultanate of Turkey is the beginning of a new and better order of things, for both Turkey and her colonies.

Through drought, inertia, and unbearable taxation, Tripoli's agricultural resources barely keep her inhabitants from starvation. Her caravan trade is leaking out to the south by way of the Niger, and what little intermittently trickles northward is unstable because of the insecurity of the routes. Thus the great decrease in her leading exports reflects unfavorably on the general commercial prosperity of Tripoli, but more saliently emphasizes the need of developing her agricultural resources. Turkey seems not only indifferent but averse to improvements of any kind, apparently not wishing to encourage either native or foreign interests, thereby attracting attention to the country. Yet with a jealous eye Turkey guards this province—perhaps that she may continue to squeeze from the flat, leathern money-pouches of the Arabs more miserable *verghi* and tithes; perhaps that she may maintain a door between Constantinople and the hinterland of Tripoli, through which to secretly replenish her supply of slaves.

Along the rough trails back in the plateau lands and the mountains of the Jebel Tarhuna and the Gharian, I have occasionally run across great broken-down coffer-dams. Along the coast I have ridden for the greater part of a day over the fine-crumbled remains of Roman towns, now and again clattering over the tessellated pavement of all that

was left of some Roman villa which had overlooked the blue expanse of the Mediterranean,—the dams tell of the previous conservation of vast water supplies which once irrigated the fertile hills and plateau upon which a great Roman and native population depended. Other evidence is not wanting which tells us that in those days much of the land was thickly wooded, largely cultivated, and populated.

It is claimed that since those days great climatic changes must have occurred to so alter the face of the land and convert it to its present, arid, sun-dried condition. In those times it is said that the rainfall was perennial—far in excess of the present, and apparently sufficient for all purposes of agriculture; so much so, that some modern travellers have sought to ascribe the construction of these dams to the necessity of providing against periodical inundations.

It is difficult, however, not to believe that the works in question which were thrown across wadis at different levels served as reservoirs for purposes of irrigation, as is shown today by the existence of remains of similar dams in eastern Palestine.

There is every reason to believe that it will be a Christian European power which will open for the Tripolitan that sesame which will arouse him from his inertia and usher him into fields where he will take new heart and courage; and Tripoli will be reclaimed from the Desert.